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What outcomes do police record for young alleged offenders in Victoria?

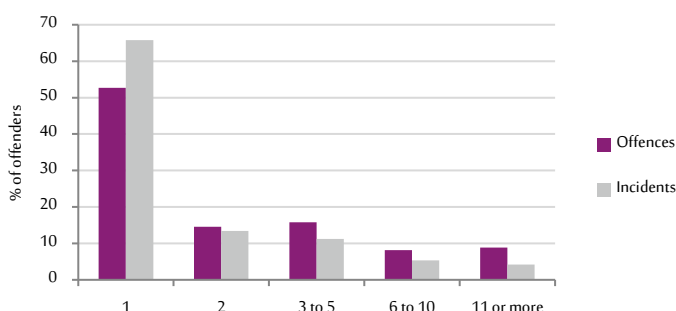
Recent Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) analysis has revealed that the number of young offenders in Victoria has decreased over the past ten years but that the number of offences recorded by police for this group has increased slightly (Millsted and Sutherland, 2016). The number of offences recorded by police is the number alleged to have been committed, and is not necessarily indicative of the number of offences for which these young people are eventually proven guilty. Though the CSA does not hold data on court outcomes, data is available on the action taken by police in response to the alleged offence, for example whether an offender was cautioned, arrested or issued with a summons.

The purpose of this paper is to consider the extent to which offences alleged to have been committed by young people progress from being recorded by police to a more formal legal action, and potential progression through the criminal justice system. The analysis presented here is based on offences recorded between 1 April 2015 and 30 March 2016, alleged to have been committed by people aged 10 to 17 as at 1 April 2015. This sample included 7,998 alleged offenders. In total over the past year, this group were recorded for 20,134 separate incidents involving 32,191 alleged offences.

The majority of 10 to 17 year old alleged offenders were only recorded for a single incident over the past year.

Figure 1 shows the number of offences and incidents recorded for per unique offender over the past year. The majority (66%, n=5,264) of alleged offenders only had one incident recorded. Because multiple offences can be recorded per incident, a larger proportion had one incident recorded compared to those who had one offence recorded.

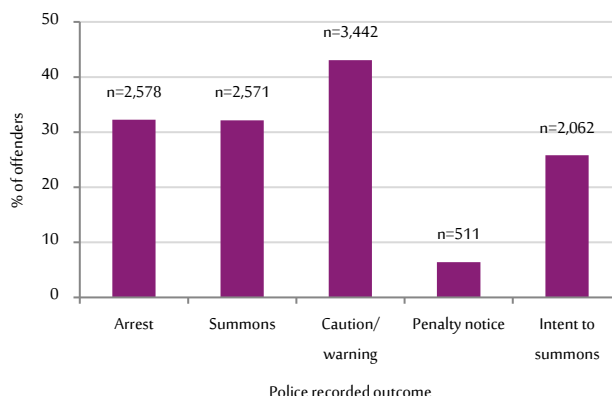
Figure 1: Proportion of offenders aged 10 to 17 recorded for 1, 2, 3 to 5, 6 to 10 and 11 or more offences and incidents



Over a third of young alleged offenders were only recorded for a caution or warning for their recorded offence(s).

Overall, 35% (n=2,773) of the young offenders analysed received only a caution or warning for their recorded offence(s) over the past year. A further 3% (n=208) received only a penalty notice and an additional 19 offenders received only penalty notice(s) and caution/warning(s). As shown in Figure 2, a total of 32% (n=2,578) of the offenders received at least one arrest, 32% (n=2,571) received at least one summons, and for 26% (n=2,062) police recorded that they intended to summons the offender at some point in the future.

Figure 2: Proportion of offenders who recorded for at least one of each police outcome



* Note that this figure excludes 'other' outcomes recorded and CSA data holdings do not cover all penalty notices issued in Victoria.

Alleged offenders with a high frequency of offending over the past year were more likely to receive at least one arrest, summons, or intent to summons than those with a low frequency of offending, who were more likely to receive a caution or warning.

Table 1 shows the outcomes recorded for people according to how many offences they were alleged to have committed over the past year. People recorded for more than one offence over the period are counted once for each outcome type they had recorded. As shown, the more offences someone is recorded for, the more likely they are to have at least one arrest, summons or intent to summons recorded. Almost all of those (97%) recorded for 11 or more offences had at least one arrest recorded. The opposite is the case for cautions or warnings, with the likelihood of having a caution or warning recorded decreasing as the number of offences per offender increases.

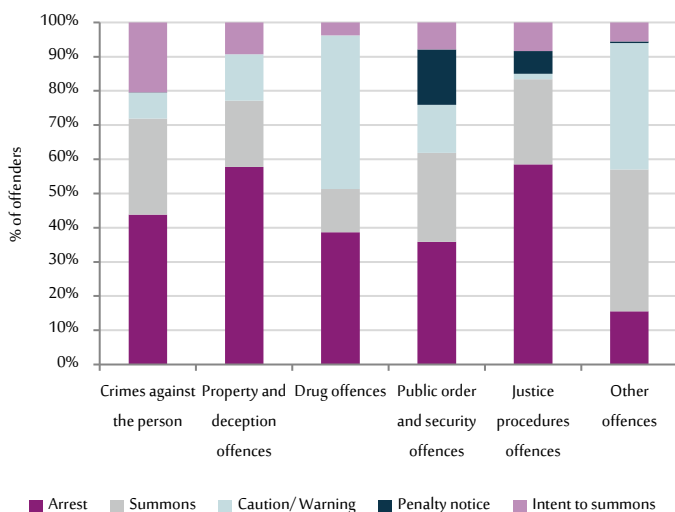
Table 1: Proportion of offenders recorded for at least one of each police outcome by number of offences recorded per offender

Number of offences per offender		Police recorded outcome				
		Arrest	Summons	Caution/Warning	Penalty notice	Intent to Summons
1 offence	%	9.4	13.1	58.0	4.4	15.1
	n	395	552	2,443	187	638
2 offences	%	27.6	34.5	36.0	4.6	25.3
	n	321	401	418	53	294
3 to 5 offences	%	52.2	50.0	26.0	6.8	31.9
	n	658	630	328	85	402
6 to 10 offences	%	79.2	67.7	20.5	7.8	45.0
	n	517	442	134	51	294
11 or more offences	%	97.0	77.1	16.8	19.1	61.3
	n	687	546	119	135	434

The majority of property and deception and justice procedures offences recorded for youth offenders are dealt with by way of an arrest.

Figure 3 shows the police outcomes recorded across each of the high-level offence categories used by the CSA. As shown, property and deception offences and justice procedures offences are associated with a higher proportion of arrests, with 58% of offences in both categories being dealt with by way of an arrest. On the other hand, drug offences are most likely to result in a caution or warning being recorded (45%), though this is perhaps expected given that Victoria Police’s Drug Diversion Program provides a specific cautioning option for drug use and possession offences. Similarly, public order and security offences are associated with a greater likelihood of receiving a penalty notice (16%).

Figure 3: Offence type by police-recorded outcome



The police recorded outcomes associated with a selection of more detailed offence categories are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Offence type by outcome recorded

Offence type		Police recorded outcome				
		Arrest	Summons	Caution/Warning	Penalty notice	Intent to Summons
Assault & related	%	33.9	34.4	9.0	0.1	22.6
	n	1,387	1,410	368	4	926
Sexual offences	%	12.1	22.8	14.4	0.0	50.6
	n	58	109	69	0	242
Robbery	%	82.1	7.4	0.4	0.4	9.8
	n	931	84	4	4	111
Stalking & harassment	%	46.3	30.5	7.8	0.0	15.4
	n	292	192	49	0	97
Dangerous acts	%	58.1	27.1	6.6	0.0	8.2
	n	369	172	42	0	52
Arson	%	54.9	19.4	15.7	0.0	10.0
	n	224	79	64	0	41
Property damage	%	38.4	32.2	14.0	0.0	15.4
	n	1,613	1,350	587	0	647
Burglary	%	70.0	9.5	10.9	0.0	9.6
	n	1,603	218	250	0	219
Theft	%	61.3	15.9	15.5	0.0	7.3
	n	5,752	1,492	1,458	0	682
Deception	%	72.3	20.1	3.7	0.0	3.9
	n	1,051	292	54	0	56
Drug use & possession	%	34.6	12.8	49.2	0.0	3.4
	n	422	156	600	0	42
Weapons & explosives	%	41.8	25.2	14.5	10.9	7.6
	n	383	231	133	100	70
Offensive behaviour	%	35.0	23.5	4.2	28.7	8.7
	n	424	285	51	348	105
Public nuisance	%	29.3	32.0	32.0	0.0	6.7
	n	187	204	204	0	43
Justice procedures	%	51.8	28.5	6.3	3.2	10.3
	n	322	177	39	20	64
Breaches of orders	%	60.2	24.0	0.5	7.5	7.9
	n	1,445	575	11	179	189

Police recorded outcomes provide some measure of the seriousness of offending, and of the extent to which offences recorded by police proceed to formal legal proceedings. The brief analysis presented here showed that over two-thirds of alleged offenders aged 10 to 17 were recorded for just one incident over the past 12 months. Further, just over one-third received a caution/warning for their offence(s) during this period. Future CSA analyses will explore the characteristics of young offenders who offend at a high level of frequency and/or seriousness.